

# Local PFLAG to Virginia Foxx: 'Hate is no Hoax'

Group places print ads in three Winston-Salem newspapers

by Matt Comer . Q-Notes staff

WINSTON-SALEM — Members of a local Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG) chapter are encouraging community members to make their concerns known to Rep. Virginia Foxx (R-NC), after she called the motivation for the 1998 murder of Matthew Shepard a "hoax."

During debate on April 29 on the floor of the U.S. House, Foxx, who represents the northwestern Piedmont, lambasted a federal hate crimes bill named in honor of Shepard, a 21-year-old gay college student who was severely beaten and left for dead after being lured out of a bar by Russell Henderson and Aaron McKinney.



Virginia Foxx

"The bill was named after a very unfortunate incident that happened, where a young man was killed, but we know that that young man was killed in the commitment of robbery. It wasn't because he was gay," the congresswoman said. "The bill was named for him, the hate crimes bill was named for him, but it's, it's really a hoax, that that continues to be used as an excuse for passing these bills."

Thomas Farmer, president of the Winston-Salem chapter of PFLAG, said his group felt it was necessary to address the situation at the community and constituent level.

"There are very few times an organization gets handed a situation they can use as a teachable

moment — as a chance to bring attention to the fact that violent crimes committed against GLBT people happen everyday," he told Q-Notes.

PFLAG Winston-Salem has spent more than \$4,300 to place half-page color ads in three papers. The ads ran in the daily *Winston-Salem Journal* and *YES! Weekly* on May 6 and the weekly, African-American community paper, *The Winston-Salem Chronicle*, on May 7.

After coming under intense pressure from constituents and citizens across the country, Foxx released a statement saying her comments reflected a "poor choice of words." She's also sent a handwritten letter apologizing to Judy Shepard, Matthew Shepard's mother, who was present in the House Gallery when Foxx made her statements. Earlier in April, Foxx had also used the racially-charged term "tar baby," also during a House debate.

Farmer said Foxx's apology hasn't been sincere.

"She needs to understand that this is not just a gaffe," he said. "It's not just about using the wrong word. It isn't just semantics."

Neena Mabe of Pfafftown, a PFLAG Winston-Salem member whose 17-year-old daughter is a lesbian, said she was extremely upset by the controversy.

"It is unfortunate that any elected representative would be so ill-informed on the specifics of this crime," she said. "I think her comments point out an inability to see the

## Where they stand

The hate crimes bill now heads to the Senate. At press time, it had yet to be heard. Q-Notes contacted spokespeople for both Sen. Richard Burr (R) and Sen. Kay Hagan (D) and asked their positions on the bill.

"No human being should be subject to a crime just because they belong to a certain group," Burr said in a prepared statement through press secretary David Ward. "Any such crimes are despicable. Victims suffer regardless of the motivation of the crime which is why I support prosecuting any individual who commits a crime to the fullest extent of the law."

Hagan's press secretary, David Hoffman reiterated her past statements in support of hate crimes legislation. "Senator Hagan has said that she will vote for the Matthew Shepard Act in the Senate," Hoffman said. ▀

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world through anything other than her own experiences which significantly limits her ability to be effective as a representative."

Farmer said he hoped the ads encouraged people to communicate with Foxx.

"We want people to let Virginia Foxx know what their thoughts are on the issue, so that she will know where all her constituents stand," he said. "We have to go to the heart of the issue, ask how do we live with each other and support each other. We have to find ways that we can come together and talk about these things." ▀

**Tell Congresswoman Virginia Foxx: Hate Is No "Hoax"**

During a recent debate on the House floor, Congresswoman Foxx described the brutal, anti-gay murder of college student Matthew Shepard as a "hoax."

The real hoax, however, is Foxx's arguments against hate crimes laws.

The truth is this:  
In 2007, violent crimes against the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender community increased by a staggering 24%.

Join the Winston-Salem Chapter of Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG) in making sure Congresswoman Foxx knows the truth.

Call (336) 778-0211, (828) 265-0240 or (202) 225-2071 and tell Congresswoman Foxx:

**Hate Is No "Hoax."**

Our Loved Ones Deserve Protection — and North Carolina Deserves to Know the Truth.

[www.pflagwinstonsalem.org](http://www.pflagwinstonsalem.org)

PFLAG Winston-Salem is spending more than \$4,300 on this ad to Virginia Foxx in three area newspapers.

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1208 The Plaza  
Charlotte

**Charlotte Business Guild**

**Meeting Date:**  
Tuesday, June 16, 2009

**Program:**  
Elke Kennedy, Sean's Last Wish  
Crowne Plaza Hotel  
201 S. McDowell St., Uptown Charlotte

**Time:**  
Cash bar social: 5:30 pm • Heavy hors d'oeuvres: 5:30 pm

**To Reserve:**  
Cost: \$15 members, \$25 non-members  
Call 704-565-5075 by 12 pm, Friday, June 12, 2009  
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